

# THE BOSTON INFORMER

No. 9 Newsletter for the Downtown, Waterfront, North End, Beacon Hill, South Station and West End

July-August 1993

## Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning, and whatever else affects life in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*! Anthony Casendino, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.



### Transportation Bond Bill

The proposed 1993 Transportation Bond Bill authorizes the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) and its agencies to spend \$5.32 billion over the next five years. Some 54 percent (\$2.89 billion) would be reimbursed

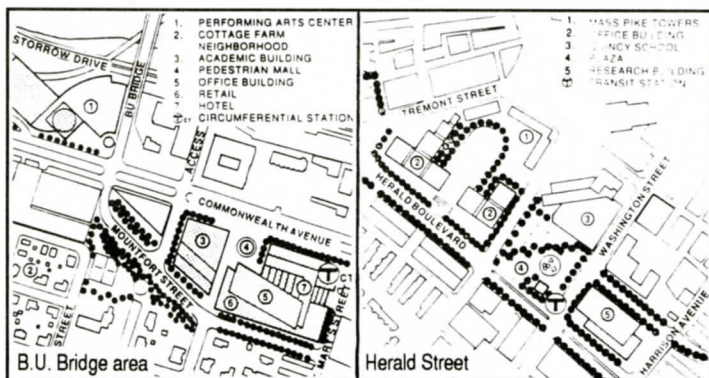
by the federal government. The state would issue bonds to cover the remaining \$2.43 billion. The bond bill also authorizes the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to spend \$150 million on transportation-related projects, such as bridge painting and repair and construction of bikeways and rail trails.

The breakdown by agency: \$3.86 billion is for the Massachusetts Highway Department, including \$2.29 billion for Interstate Highway projects (mostly Central Artery/Tunnel project). The MBTA is authorized to spend \$1.18 billion, including only \$403.2 million to do projects required by the Clean Air Act Amendments and the Central Artery/Tunnel project. Finally, EOTC has \$278 million for projects, including \$60 million for the initial design, permitting, and review of the North Station-South Station rail link. Placing the \$60 million for the rail link planning under EOTC is an attempt to answer critics who say construction of the rail link would drain the MBTA funds and cancel other worthwhile projects, such as a circumferential rail line that would have three times the riders for almost the same cost.

Key elements of the bond bill include:

- Management reform, which would place the EOTC secretary the chair of Massport and MassPike and make the Board terms co-terminus with the governor; require issuance of bonds to be approved by the secretary of Administration & Finance; make and examine a new finance strategy for the MBTA.

- Authorize \$6 million for the construction of bike/walking paths.
- Authorize \$96.5 million to complete North Station.



The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority recently released a report on potential air-rights development over the Turnpike in Boston/Brookline. The study looked at the area from the B.U. Bridge to South Bay. Above plans show potential air-rights development. Source: Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.



### Central Artery/North Area

Construction of temporary loop ramps over Boston Sand & Gravel in Charlestown to connect Route 1 to I-93 is expected to begin soon. These double-deck ramps will allow the new City Square tunnels to be used while the main-

line Central Artery makes its way through the years of the design, permitting, and construction phases. Construction will take one year, after which the temporary detour ramp will be removed in winter 1994-95. City Square landscaping and road work will be done in spring 1995.



### Charles River Crossing

The Charles River Crossing Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (DEIS/R), required to address potential impacts of alternatives to Scheme Z for crossing the river, is out for public comment.

The DEIS/R describes in detail alternatives developed over a three-year period after Scheme Z was roundly criticized. The 42-member Bridge Design Review Committee, appointed to work on reducing the impacts of the crossing, recommended alternative 8.1D after almost 18 months' work. This alternative was refined and called 8.1D Modified 5 during an initial environmental review. Both the Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Highway Administration had major concerns about 8.1D Modified 5; thus, the state developed two other alternatives:

The three alternatives are:

- **8.1D Modified 5:** Ten lanes over the river, three-lane river tunnel, one loop ramp near North Point. \$1.28 billion.
- **Reduced River-Tunnel:** Twelve lanes over river, two-lane river tunnel, two loop ramps. \$1.13 billion.
- **Non-River Tunnel:** Fourteen lanes over river, land-side tunnels in North Station-area only, three-transitioning-to-two loop ramps. \$995 million.

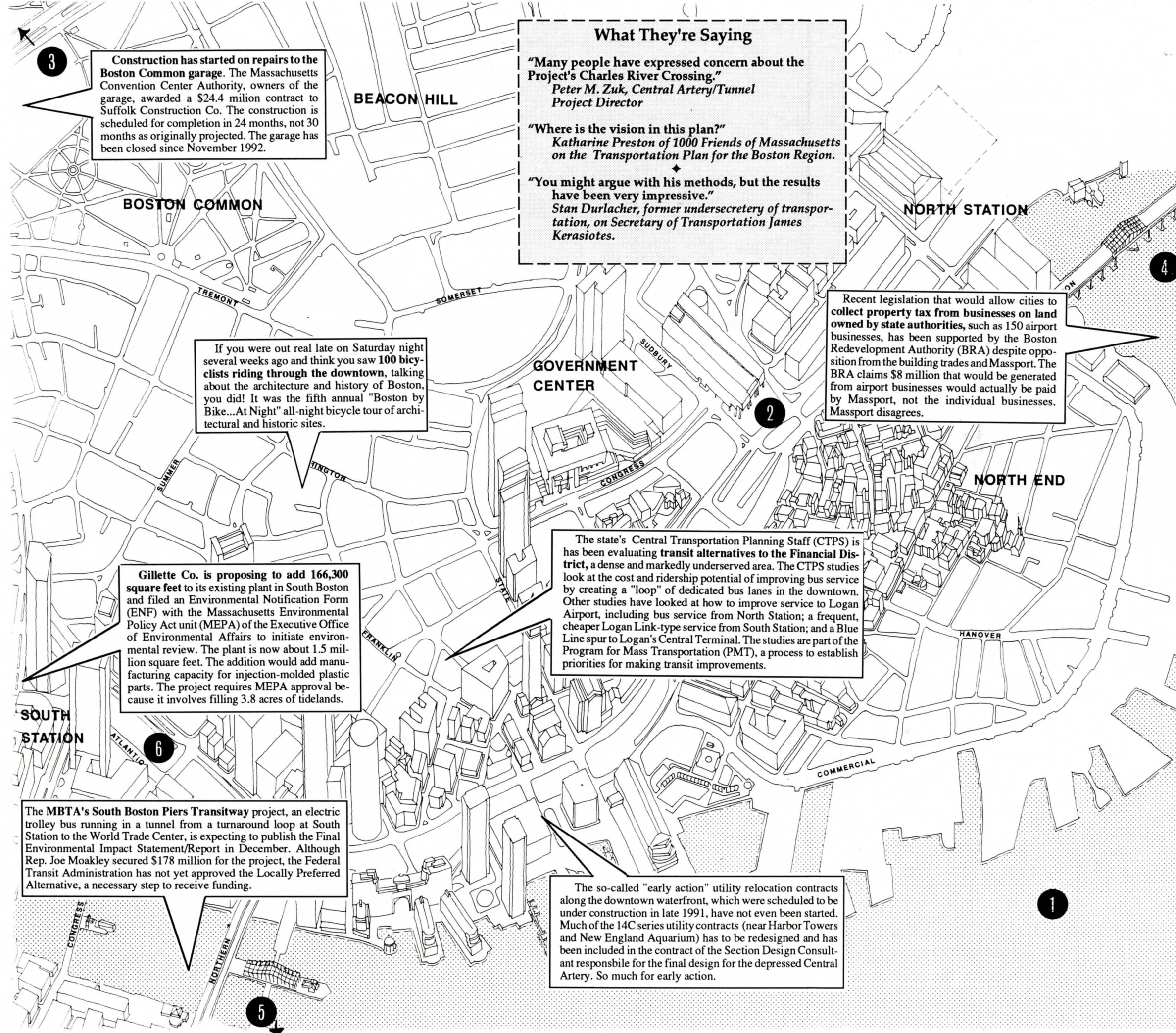
The 8.1D Modified 5 scheme would take 13 years to build, in contrast to 8.5 years to 9 years for all others, including Scheme Z. The City of Boston supports 8.1D Modified 5. If any alternative other than what was approved by the Committee is selected, there still is the potential for litigation to stop it. The Executive Office of Transportation and Construction has refrained from stating a preference, although it is rumored that the non-river-tunnel plan is the only alternative the state thinks it can afford and can build. The cheapest alternative would cost \$495 million more than Scheme Z.

Informational meetings will be held in Charlestown (Sept. 8), Cambridge (Sept. 9); and at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (Sept. 13). An all-day public hearing will be held on Sept. 14 at the Museum of Science.

### NOT IN THIS ISSUE:

- Report on the Final Generic Logan Airport
- Proposed changes to Boston linkage
- Controversy at Zoning Board





3

Construction has started on repairs to the Boston Common garage. The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, owners of the garage, awarded a \$24.4 million contract to Suffolk Construction Co. The construction is scheduled for completion in 24 months, not 30 months as originally projected. The garage has been closed since November 1992.

BEACON HILL

BOSTON COMMON

If you were out real late on Saturday night several weeks ago and think you saw 100 bicyclists riding through the downtown, talking about the architecture and history of Boston, you did! It was the fifth annual "Boston by Bike...At Night" all-night bicycle tour of architectural and historic sites.

### What They're Saying

"Many people have expressed concern about the Project's Charles River Crossing."  
*Peter M. Zuk, Central Artery/Tunnel Project Director*

"Where is the vision in this plan?"  
*Katharine Preston of 1000 Friends of Massachusetts on the Transportation Plan for the Boston Region.*

"You might argue with his methods, but the results have been very impressive."  
*Stan Durlacher, former undersecretary of transportation, on Secretary of Transportation James Kerasiotes.*

NORTH STATION

4

Recent legislation that would allow cities to collect property tax from businesses on land owned by state authorities, such as 150 airport businesses, has been supported by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) despite opposition from the building trades and Massport. The BRA claims \$8 million that would be generated from airport businesses would actually be paid by Massport, not the individual businesses. Massport disagrees.

GOVERNMENT CENTER

2

The state's Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) is has been evaluating transit alternatives to the Financial District, a dense and markedly underserved area. The CTPS studies look at the cost and ridership potential of improving bus service by creating a "loop" of dedicated bus lanes in the downtown. Other studies have looked at how to improve service to Logan Airport, including bus service from North Station; a frequent, cheaper Logan Link-type service from South Station; and a Blue Line spur to Logan's Central Terminal. The studies are part of the Program for Mass Transportation (PMT), a process to establish priorities for making transit improvements.

NORTH END

Gillette Co. is proposing to add 166,300 square feet to its existing plant in South Boston and filed an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act unit (MEPA) of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to initiate environmental review. The plant is now about 1.5 million square feet. The addition would add manufacturing capacity for injection-molded plastic parts. The project requires MEPA approval because it involves filling 3.8 acres of tidelands.

SOUTH STATION

6

The MBTA's South Boston Piers Transitway project, an electric trolley bus running in a tunnel from a turnaround loop at South Station to the World Trade Center, is expecting to publish the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report in December. Although Rep. Joe Moakley secured \$178 million for the project, the Federal Transit Administration has not yet approved the Locally Preferred Alternative, a necessary step to receive funding.

The so-called "early action" utility relocation contracts along the downtown waterfront, which were scheduled to be under construction in late 1991, have not even been started. Much of the 14C series utility contracts (near Harbor Towers and New England Aquarium) has to be redesigned and has been included in the contract of the Section Design Consultant responsible for the final design for the depressed Central Artery. So much for early action.

COMMERCIAL

1

5

## What's Up?

1

While much attention is being given to the Central Artery/Tunnel project activity, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has been working actively across Boston Harbor and in surrounding areas building the infrastructure to clean Boston Harbor.

To date, construction by the MWRA is more than twice the dollar amount of the Artery/Tunnel project, over \$3 billion in construction on the Boston Harbor cleanup alone. Responding to recent rate disputes, the MWRA stated that 80 percent or more of its projects are mandated by federal law and that cutbacks in state and federal funding have put the burden on the local taxpayer. While stating that rates go up primarily due to growing debt service to support the bond-financed investments, the MWRA has had to deal with the question of its advisor on bond dealings.

2

The results of a study looking at the MBTA's bus system, prepared by COMSIS Corporation consultants, recommends contracting 20 to 60 bus routes to private contractors. The consultants documented the MBTA's bus operating cost at \$95 per hour, second highest in the nation, and the cost per revenue mile at \$7.59, fifth in the nation and 25 percent higher than the national average. The report concludes that the MBTA cannot do anything to reduce costs but cut the unit cost of providing bus service.

The recommendations included implementing contracted services at or near the rate of attrition of MBTA employees; closing or leasing MBTA garages no longer needed; and keeping control of routes, schedules and fares with the MBTA. COMSIS suggested the MBTA focus on privatizing buses operating from Lynn, Quincy and Albany Street garages, the 300 and 400 series express routes, and routes serving Salem, Quincy Center, Lynn and Haymarket stations. Recommendations are to issue Request for Proposals to run the services—and MBTA unions are eligible to bid—in September and start the first increment of new service in Spring 1994.

3

The Boston Convention Complex is the creation of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority which is trying to promote the Hynes Convention Center, Westin and Marriott hotels, the Sheraton hotel and when completed, the new Prudential Center. The concept is that the complex is within walking distance of everything.

4

Members of the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) Infrastructure Forum will lead a bike ride tour (err) site visit, of the New Inner Ring on Sunday, Sept. 12 to prepare for its charrette/workshop on Sept. 18-19 which will look at transportation, social and educational opportunities to be pursued in the circumferential ring around Boston. Groups will ride from JFK/UMass MBTA station (Red Line) and Maverick station (Blue Line) and meet near the Grand Junction Railroad Bridge (runs under the BU Bridge) for lunch. Call the BSA for details, 951-1433.

5

More improvements to the Federal Courthouse to be built on the Fan Pier have been proposed by the Task Force established by the General Services Administration, the proponents. Some of the improvements suggested are changes to the interior, the park and additions to the water-dependent elements. Cost: \$9 million. The Task Force also recommended improvements to the area around the Courthouse, such as making the Old Northern Avenue Bridge a pedestrian link, widening Farnsworth Street and connecting it to the new MBTA transitway station, and enhancing Fort Point Channel water uses—another \$30.5 million.

6

The Central Artery Joint Development Working Group has been meeting twice a month, focusing on three issues: Dewey Square urban design, North End/Bulfinch Triangle, and the surface roadways. In the discussion is the question of who will own the land over the depressed Artery and what rights the public will have. Case in point is the parcel near Dewey Square assumed to be for the Horticultural Society's Winter Garden. The Winter Garden is deemed a "public use," but should the public land be fenced off and admission charged? Luckily, there's a little cushion of time, about eight years, before things happen. That's a lot of time for meetings....



## Whom do I contact??

Patrick Harrington, Boston Parks  
Department Commissioner...call 635-4505

Jan Reitsma, Director of MEPA...727-5830.

Richard Heath, Executive Director of the  
Boston GreenSpace Alliance  
...call 426-7980

Astrid Glynn, EOTC, Director of  
transportation planning...call 973-7049



The Public Review Process

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## You were asking...

**Q. What is Matt Coogan, former undersecretary of transportation for Massachusetts, doing these days?**

**A.** One of the state's most influential and respected leaders in the transportation field for over 20 years, Matt Coogan served as project coordinator for the Boston Redevelopment Authority before becoming undersecretary of transportation at the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC). After leaving EOTC in January 1991, Coogan worked at Rackemann Environmental Services until moving to Quechee, Vermont, recently. He is reportedly consulting on airport issues.

**Q. What is ISTEA?**

**A.** ISTEA stands for Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, signed by President Bush in Dec. 1991. ISTEA is a break from the past in many key ways: ISTEA emphasizes process over projects; returns to the federal requirement for continuing, comprehensive and cooperative planning; allows more flexibility in how states spend money, and much more.

**Q. What's the status of plans for the Northern Avenue replacement ramp at Rowes Wharf, under review by the Environmental Affairs Office?**

**A.** No decision has been made on whether the Central Artery/Tunnel project must do more environmental analysis on potential impacts of a temporary ramp near Harbor Towers. A Notice of Project Change was filed in April explaining that the ramp would be built to replace the Northern Avenue on-ramp, to be removed for utility relocations. Despite studies that show the ramp would alleviate Atlantic Avenue traffic jams, the Trustees of Harbor Towers oppose the temporary ramp citing excessive noise impacts from increased traffic. The ramp "must" be open by February 1996.

## The Boston Informer

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